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A Hero Perished: the Diary and Selected Letters of Nile Kinnick

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Neugebauer has provided an excellent introduction and useful annotations that explain economic problems, trace government policy, and clarify family relationships. Her selections make this abbreviated, published version of the diaries useful for both students and scholars. Primarily, her selections concern matters of agriculture, but she has included some entries that social historians will find valuable. My only criticism is that she corrected DeLoach's grammar, punctuation, and spelling. As a result, she has sanitized his writing. Although the general reader may appreciate this editorial technique, the diary has lost some of its charm and genuineness. As a result, scholars who want to quote from the dairies should consult the original ledgers, but they can use the factual information published here with confidence.

Although DeLoach never left the southern Great Plains to farm anywhere else, Iowans can profit from reading his diary because it provides a general understanding of the problems small-scale farmers faced during much of the twentieth century. It also will prove suggestive for similar projects. With luck, someone will discover and publish the twentieth-century diaries of Iowa farm men and women. Sources such as these are invaluable for understanding the past.

A Hero Perished: The Diary and Selected Letters of Nile Kinnick, edited by Paul Baender. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1991. xliii, 292 pp. Illustrations, notes. \$27.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY DAVID L. PORTER, WILLIAM PENN COLLEGE

A Hero Perished contains the letters and diary of Nile Clarke Kinnick, the most legendary University of Iowa football player. His 1939 grid-iron feats made him a national celebrity and earned him the Heisman, Maxwell, and Camp trophies as college player of the year.

Editor Paul Baender adeptly reviews Kinnick's career in the introduction, showing how the heroic American innocent moved from activist to legend to myth. Kinnick grew up in rural Adel, Iowa, the grandson of Iowa governor G. W. Clarke, and the son of Nile C. Kinnick, a farmer, and Frances (Clarke) Kinnick, a devout Christian Scientist. The Kinnicks disciplined Nile to strive for a measure of greatness and taught him the values of work, organization, advancement, and self-control. After excelling in high-school athletics, young Kinnick enrolled at the University of Iowa in 1936 and won All-Big Ten Conference football honors in 1937. He experienced an injury-plagued 1938 season, but achieved legendary status in 1939. Kinnick graduated Phi Beta Kappa from Iowa with an economics degree in 1940 and bypassed professional football to enter the University of

Iowa Law School. He enlisted in the U.S. Navy in September 1941 and entered the Naval Reserve Air Corps that December. In 1943 he became a fighter pilot. Kinnick's tragic death came at age 24 on June 2, 1943, when his Grumman Wildcat plane developed an oil leak and crashed into the Gulf of Paria between Venezuela and Trinidad.

Kinnick relates his own tales in both selected letters and diary, housed at the University of Iowa Libraries. Kinnick's engaging letters were written mainly to family members between 1936 and 1943. Editor Baender provides introductory comments, explaining the context of each letter. Kinnick's diary, published for the first time in its entirety, details his military service from December 1941 to September 1942 and briefly in 1943. *A Hero Perished* also includes Kinnick's stirring Heisman Trophy acceptance speech and his impassioned commencement supper address, imploring his classmates to achieve moral courage in a time of depression and war.

Generally, the clean-cut, All-American exhibited honesty, industry, purpose, dedication, and humanitarianism and epitomized traditional American values of earnestness, patriotism, hard work, and democracy. On the other hand, the often indecisive Kinnick vacillated between being mature and boyish, wise and naive, and profound and banal. A shy, modest individual, Kinnick considered success and happiness transitory, relished new challenges, and continually sought advice from his family.

The letters reveal that Kinnick plunged into numerous activities simultaneously. At the University of Iowa, he effectively blended athletics, academics, a part-time job, lecture trips, fraternity functions, and cultural activities. He enjoyed movies and developed a love for reading masterpiece books after entering military service. Kinnick also frequently dated and corresponded with Merle McKay of Kansas City and other women and often worried about his inability to find a wife. "I shall not consider my mortal existence complete," Kinnick wrote, "until I have loved and won a woman, who commands my admiration and respect in every way" (175). He also worried about his career, wondering whether to become an Iowa farmer or a flour salesman and politician.

The letters and diary also reflect Kinnick's political and military views. Kinnick usually supported Republican party principles and often criticized President Franklin D. Roosevelt. He idolized British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, praising his inspirational words and deeds. He lauded Russian military efforts while disdaining Hitler and German aggression. The European war increasingly commanded Kinnick's attention. He initially expressed relief at not being directly involved on the European battlefield. At the Heisman Trophy cere-

monies in December 1939, he remarked, "I thank God I was warring on the gridirons of the midwest and not on the battlefields of Europe" (36). By September 1941, however, worsening European conditions prompted Kinnick to enlist in the Navy. Ground school training, aerial lessons, and other military activities fill much of Kinnick's diary and letters thereafter.

A Hero Perished is far more than just a football book. It is a welcome addition to the growing literature on notable Iowans and should appeal to those interested in Iowa history in general and in biographies, sports, and the military in particular. Some letters include inconsequential items, which perhaps should have been deleted. Kinnick's spelling errors and inconsistent style occasionally distract the reader. The reader also may want to know more about what Kinnick wrote to friends and their replies to him. Despite these minor shortcomings, the book deftly paints a portrait of a gifted, active, decent, yet vulnerable young man, one who deserves widespread admiration for his principles, loyalty, and dedication at a critical stage of history.

Everyone's Country Estate: A History of Minnesota's State Parks, by Roy W. Meyer. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1991. xviii, 357 pp. Illustrations, notes, appendix, bibliography, index. \$34.95 cloth, \$19.95 paper.

Iowa's State Parks: Also Forests, Recreation Areas, and Preserves, by Robert Charles Wolf. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1991. xi, 224 pp. Illustrations, maps, appendixes, index. \$21.95 cloth, \$14.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY REBECCA CONARD, PHR ASSOCIATES

Similar cover photographs invite readers to open both of these books: sun-specked woods on *Everyone's Country Estate*, flower-festooned woods on *Iowa's State Parks*. The contents of each, however, are decidedly different. Roy Meyer approaches the history of Minnesota's state park system in familiar chronological fashion. Roy Wolf presents Iowa's parks geographically, with brief historical summaries included as part of each description.

Meyer makes it clear at the beginning that *Everyone's Country Estate* is not an interpretive or analytical history, but his opinions on certain issues of park management are evident from time to time. Although the text proceeds chronologically, Meyer divides the story into ten chapters that establish more clearly the evolutionary process inherent in the growth of the Minnesota system. Chapter headings

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